REMARKS

ON THE

CONTROVERSIAL WRITINGS

OF

Dr. MIDDLETON;

And particularly on his

EXAMINATION

OF

The Use and Intent of Prophecy.

In a LETTER to ——

PART I.

IN WHICH

Several of his Arts in Controversy are enumerated and set in a proper Light.

LONDON:

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The Printer to the Reader.

THE following Sheets were communicated by a Friend: they ſeem to have been wrote ſoon after Dr Middleton publiſhed his Examination; and would probably have been printed under the Author's Name, if the Doctor had lived a little longer.

ERRATA.

Page 12. line 32. after *if*, read *you*.
21. l. 14. for *of yours*, read *of theirs*.
23. l. 10. for *one of*, read *one and*.
24. l. 30. for *ſyllables*, read *ſquabbles*.
25. l. 26. for *paſſages*, read *paſſage*.

REMARKS

ON THE

CONTROVERSIAL WRITINGS

OF

Dr. MIDDLETON.

SIR,

THE very morning after I came to town, I introduced my couſin, as you deſired, to our good friend the counſellor. After the uſual compliments, I enquired how your brother did, and was ſurprized to find the counſellor had neither ſeen nor heard of him for three or four days; — and, to be free with you, ſays he, I intended to call upon him this morning: what ſay you? ſhall we order the coach, and go to the Temple directly? You will eaſily gueſs, I did not want much intreaty to pay a viſit ſo agreeable to me; ſo the coach was called, in we went, away we drove, and bolted upon your brother without ceremony, and before he had any notice of our arrival. It would have

made you ſmile, to ſee the important figure he made with ſeveral large piles of books about him: he looked like Cato or Kuſter, in the utmoſt rage of their thirſt of knowledge.* After our compliments, the counſellor aſked him, What great cauſe he was retained in, that he had ſo many books before him? but theſe, continued he, have not the law livery: and, looking over ſeveral of them, he added, Hey! what have we here, Polemics? Why, Jack, are you going to change the law for the goſpel? You have heard, I preſume, there is at preſent a better chance for the bench than the woolſack; and perhaps you had rather be a member than an humble adviſor of the Houſe of Lords. Upon my word, I think you are in the right of it; for, in my poor opinion, it requires leſs trouble, and much leſs learning and capacity, to gain the lead in the gown, than the robe: but it is not only for your eaſe and emolument; it may likewiſe be of uſe to the cloth, as well as reputation to yourſelf. You can harangue pretty notably; you have a ſpirit and abilities fit for ſuch a ſtation: and though, in ſome inſtances, you may judge it proper to imitate the laudable taciturnity of your brethren; yet I know you have ſo much of the old Roman ſenator in you, that you would not ſuffer your beard to be rudely pulled, without a proper correction for the inſult.—— Here your brother broke in upon him. I don't know what to ſay as to my chance, or my abilities; I am obliged to you however for your good opinion of me: but you muſt eaſily foreſee it would be highly imprudent to ſcramble for the emolu-

* M. Catonem —— vidi in Bibliothecâ ſedentem, multis circumfuſum Stoicorum libris: erat enim, ut ſcis, in eo inexhauſta aviditas legendi, nec *ſatiari* poterat. De fin. bon. & mal. L. 3. Vid. Baile's dict. art. Kuſter.

ments

ments of a profeſſion, which has long been thought burthenſome, and may, who can tell how ſoon, be deemed uſeleſs: and what a poor appearance I ſhould make with my lawn ſleeves, and without my lay-fees? I am reſolved, therefore, to ſtick to my old profeſſion, for this as well as two other reaſons; firſt, becauſe I can get as much as will purchaſe the fee-ſimple of the beſt biſhopric in England, even though the clergy ſhould do their utmoſt to prevent me; and ſecondly, becauſe I really believe I could get twice as much if they were ſilenced*. As to the other point, the books you ſee here, —— you muſt know, I have been looking over Dr M.'s piece againſt the biſhop of London; induced to it, partly from the fame of the author; partly from the noiſe it has made; and partly, I muſt confeſs, from the reſpect I ſtill retain for my old maſter of the Temple: a perſon, who I believe you muſt own, has abilities equal to his high ſtation. Having gone thro' this pamphlet of the Dr's, my curioſity led me on inſenſibly to dip into moſt of his other controverſial pieces.——

Ay, now, ſays the counſellor, I ſhall have ſome hopes of you. I have often condemned you for your unaccountable attachment to pedants and ſyſtems; but if you are once brought to read Dr M. you cannot help going into his opinions. All that he advances is ſo clear and reaſonable, expreſſed with ſuch accuracy and purity, delivered with ſo great a love of truth, and ſuch an entire contempt of all ſyſtems, that the reader is taken captive at his will, and all oppoſition falls down before him.

* The author ſeems to think, that the clergy do not promote, but prevent law ſuits, contrary to the common opinion.

I remember, when I was young, Chillingworth and Tillotſon were recommended to me: the former, for the acuteneſs of his judgment, and the ſtrength of his reaſoning; his reach of thought, and cloſeneſs of expreſſion: the latter, for the admirable juſtneſs and delicacy of his ſentiments; and a natural, eaſy, flowing ſtile. But if I was to point out a ſtandard for imitation, it ſhould be M. equal to either of the other in their moſt admired excellencies; and greatly ſuperior to both of them in the harmony of his periods, in the perſpicuity of his ſentiments, and in the purity and propriety of his language. I admire him upon all ſubjects, and in every way in which he has been pleaſed to treat them: but, I own, it gives me great pleaſure that he now ſeems to confine his thoughts to controverſy; and to that peculiar caſt or manner of writing, in which he excelled at his firſt appearance, and in which he has never yet had a rival.——

Pray Sir, replied your brother, what is that peculiarity you are ſo fond of; is it the exact fidelity of his quotations?

C. Pſhaw; the old calumny to run him down, *the old method of blowing up envy againſt him* *; as if it was peculiar to him to be ſometimes miſtaken in tranſcribing an authority. If it was, there might be ſomething in it: but ſince you lead me to it, I muſt ſay, though he is not exempt from miſtakes, any more than his antagoniſts, he has one peculiarity they are free from, a readineſs to retract them; and this *too*, *with a good grace*,† even in the opinion of thoſe very antagoniſts.

However, admitting he ſometimes uſed a

* Remarks on ſome obſervations, p. 23.
† Def. 54. Some obſervations, p. 1.

little

little art, where is the mighty harm of it? for the arts of controverſy are practiſed, if not avowed, by all. Arts in themſelves harmleſs and innocent; however frightful to childiſh pedants, who cannot ſee through *the miſts their nurſes and mothers have ſpread about their eyes.** Arts, that neither tend nor are intended, either to ſupport or ſubvert the truth; the authors of them deſigning only to amuſe as well as inform, to pleaſe as well as to inſtruct, in order to gain the more admirers, and to propagate their notions the further. For, to take this in another light, pray, good Sir, is it not in a controverſy before the world, juſt as it is in our pleadings before a court? is there any difference? and yet are we not often retained on the wrong ſide? when we are ſo, do we ever ſcruple to do the beſt we can for our clients? or do we mind what we aſſert to ſerve his cauſe? and yet, what harm is done? who is hurt? whoſe life or property is endangered? what prejudice to the cauſe of truth? On the contrary, the audience is entertained; the judge kept awake; the attention of the court fixed; the ability of each council known, exerciſed, and diſtinguiſhed; all corrupt influence rendered almoſt impracticable; and the ſeveral arts of ſophiſtry and fraud, though dreſſed out to the beſt advantage, are by this means ſo ſtrongly marked, that the moſt common hearer can hardly go out of court, without being a better man than when he went into it. Thus our lives and properties are put upon a ſafer bottom by allowing this entire freedom of debate, than they could poſſibly be, if our pleadings were new-modelled by the narrow, ſour, and nonſenſical ſyſtems of ſome modern ſuperſtitious moraliſts.

* A def. of let. to Dr W. p. 5.

Why

Why then ſhould not the ſame freedom of debate, the ſame arts, be allowed openly in the face of the whole world? —— But it was not my intent to mention, much leſs to commend, the arts of controverſy; it was only to recommend the eaſe and freedom, the life and ſpirit, the candor, and generoſity, which appears ſo manifeſtly; the glow, which every reader of taſte muſt feel perpetually throughout all his controverſial pieces; for which, together with the purity of his diction, he is univerſally admired as a writer, however he may be diſliked for his opinions. This, Jack, was my meaning: but you had a mind to miſtake me, in order to introduce this popular clamour, which was early raiſed, and is ſtill kept up againſt him.

B. And why ſhould it not be ſtill kept up, if he ſtill continues to deſerve it? He may ſay what he will; but it is eaſy, to ſee it would not be in the power of his enemy to ſupport the clamour, if there was no foundation for it. Is he ſo little maſter of his pen; ſo little practiſed in the arts of controverſy, as not to ſilence the clamour, if it was ſo idle as you would make it? But it is plain it is a tender point with him, notwithſtanding all his art and addreſs to conceal it. It is plain, that his beſt friends think it ſo: that you yourſelf were alarmed at the very mention of it. Could this happen, if he and his friends were not a little conſcious, that all was not ſo right as it ſhould be? and as to yourſelf, does it not manifeſtly appear that you think ſo, from the curious ſpeech you have juſt made in favour of the arts of controverſy? A deſperate attempt in a deſperate cauſe! ſuch as evidently ſhowed, that in your opinion, he could not be defended; that it would be the eaſier part to excuſe, than to deny the fact.

A con-

A conduct, which however imprudent in a popular audience, or before the world, might yet, you thought, be ſafely ventured on in a ſelect company, and before a few friends. But what then is become of his pretences to *plain reaſoning upon plain facts*, which at ſome times is all in all with him? what is become of his *great love of truth*, which he profeſſes upon all occaſions? Is that to be propagated by his great love of —— what ſhall I call it —— his great love of *deceiving us for our good?* But why ſhould I wave the plaineſt expreſſion? for if, according to this plain ſpoken and modeſt controvertialiſt, Moſes might promote the good of his people by *political*, why may not this demagogue promote ours by *controverſial*, lying? And yet how odd is ſuch an imputation! ſtrange! he is not afraid or aſhamed to impute that to Moſes, which one does not know how to impute decently even to him. For my own part, however, I muſt freely own I ſhould think *miſts and clouds* (to uſe his own expreſſion *) *are as fit to propagate light, as falſhood is to promote the cauſe of truth.*

But you conceived you had gained your point, when you had ſupported your plea by the practice of our courts, and reduced me to the neceſſity of abandoning the bar, or the ſide of the debate I have now taken. A bold puſh, I muſt confeſs! and had it been as well aimed as it was home put, muſt certainly have hurt me: but the boldneſs of your attack gave a tremor to your arm, and your point paſt harmleſs by me. Or did you wink whan you puſhed, as they ſay ſome creatures do? if you had, you might have aimed as well: for pray, good Sir, that I may be as good to you as

* Exam. p. 92.

you are to me; what is it that is laid to Dr M.'s charge; His weak ſuperficial reaſoning? no; for though there may be much of it in his writings, as, if you will believe many of his readers, there certainly is; yet who can be ſo ſilly as to cenſure his moral character on that account? for he would ſurely argue better if he could. Is it his ſuperficial reading, or his ignorance of the learned languages? this indeed has been whiſpered; may be true; and might be pleaded: but I am much deceived if it ever has, or ever will. What is it then? It is, Sir, a habit he has got of tampering with his witneſſes; of forcing them into his ſervice, if they don't chuſe to come in upon other terms. 'Tis his art of prompting or packing his evidence; of ſhortening, or piecing, or adding to, a teſtimony; of diſplacing the words, or miſrepreſenting the ſenſe of them. Would this, Sir, be ſuffered in a court of juſtice? would a man of any reputation be concerned in ſuch practices? would not a manager, who was known to prompt or tamper with his evidence, be hooted out of a court at leaſt, if he eſcaped ſo well? but you know he would be more ſeverely treated, if he had his deſerts. I don't mention this as wiſhing M. any harm, or thinking that the faults are equal; far from it: on the contrary, I think nothing can be alleged in excuſe for ſubornation of perjury. But much compaſſion is certainly due to a writer, and ſome confidence may be ſafely placed in the reader. I am ſenſible it is no eaſy taſk to get proper authorities, as oft as they are wanted: not that it is difficult for the moſt ſuperficial ſcholar, to crowd his pages decently with learned quotations upon almoſt any ſubject; without ſeeing the authors from whom they are taken, or even underſtanding the languages they are wrote in:

what

what I mean is, that though theſe authorities are generally collected in great numbers, it is ſeldom done with any great diſcretion. How then muſt the unhappy author be diſappointed, if the teſtimonies, on which he proceeded, are, perhaps upon tryal, not any one of them fully to his purpoſe; and a favourite hypotheſis, which has coſt him much time and pains, is in danger of falling to the ground for the want of them. Imagine a writer in this ſituation; and then tell me, would it ſurprize you if he ſhould be tempted to improve his authorities, rather than his ſyſtem ſhould crumble to nothing? And indeed in productions of a ſlighter texture, this is ſo trifling a fault, that we might ſafely venture it with the reader: as in ſuch inſtances as theſe; Whether a venerable Dr in divinity may venture to delineate a Phallus upon the authority of the primitive fathers, whoſe judgment he thoroughly deſpiſes? whether the author of a late catechiſm was a knave or a fool? whether the ancient phyſicians were ſlaves or gentlemen? whether this or that man was the firſt printer? whether men formerly got into the ſenate by dint of merit or money? whether ſuch a ſtatue was originally deſigned for a ſaint or a devil? whether father Harduin was in or out of his wits? Theſe I ſay are queſtions of ſmall importance, or mere curioſity; in which a man of art may play his tricks without any great harm. But in matters of greater conſequence; ſuch as Dr M. has ſometimes formerly, and often lately, handled, an author cannot be too careful in the examination of his authorities. If the Dr will *pauſe* upon believing the *inſpiration of Moſes*; *his hiſtory of the fall, and the origin of languages*; upon believing a *prophecy, or the miracles of the fathers*; it is but reaſonable he ſhould *pauſe too* upon the authorities he pro-

duces. Inſtead of this, he ſeems ready at every turn to catch at the leaſt ſhadow of an authority for his purpoſe, however foreign to the ſenſe of the author.

C. Nay, Jack, that is carrying the point too far. Is it candid to ſuppoſe, that he is *ready*, that he *deſigns* to impoſe upon us? I indeed ſaid ſomething like it in jeſt, but I little thought you could believe it in earneſt. He may, for aught I know, cite or tranſcribe careleſsly; he may tranſlate or comment looſely: and a candid man would rather ſuppoſe this, than that he is diſingenuous. But if he is ſo, can you conceive him ſo *imprudent* as to do it? How ſhort muſt be his triumph? how ſoon, and with what advantage, tranſferred to his enemies? enemies, who want neither inclination or capacity to ſet him out in the worſt light to his readers. 'Tis enough to diſprove his authorities, without preſuming to *enter into his heart, and to deſcry his intentions.*

B. A fine doctrine truly! So, according to this, though a man is continually putting bad money upon me, I am not to believe he deſigns to cheat me, becauſe I cannot ſee his heart. At this rate we muſt never judge of appearances; pay no regard to probability, to reaſon, or to the example of M. himſelf. For though he argues ſometimes as you do; yet, if an *orthodox parſon*, a *modern prelate, or a primitive father* falls in his way, he makes no ſcruple of examining the *inſide* of him, and preſenting you with a full diſplay of his *free inquiries*. But I own you are much miſtaken, if think you have a right to uſe him in the ſame *free* manner: for, how inconſiſtent ſoever it may ſeem, he will wonder at your inſolence, and exclaim at the inſult. What! Dr M. to be put upon a level with a modern prelate, or primitive father?

father? No; he will ſoon ſhew you the difference: for, however you may be ſurprized, he will aſk, how you come *to know his thoughts?* tell you, *charity believeth all things:* and on ſo juſt an occaſion, and in ſo good a cauſe, as his muſt always be, will call *names ſtoutly, and ſcold manfully.**

If M. then will judge ſo freely of other writers, how high ſoever in ſtation, and how venerable ſoever for their antiquity; why ſhould we not plainly tell him, without ceremony, that his teſtimonies *ſeem to betray no ſmall diſingenuity; and would make us apt to ſuſpect, that he is more ſollicitous to eſtabliſh an hypotheſis than the truth.*†

This ſuſpicion muſt appear to be well founded, when we conſider, that theſe teſtimonies are many in number, preſſed into the ſervice upon trying occaſions, and where no others are to be had: many of them introduced with much art, with a ſmall alteration of a word or a point; or the place of them: arguments of long practice and great dexterity! That this ſhould never happen, but when he is at a plunge; ſhould always turn out in his favour, and in no one inſtance to his diſadvantage: if you can ſuppoſe all this the effect of inattention, he muſt be the luckieſt, as well as the greateſt blunderer that ever lived.

But a man muſt have *faith ſuperior to mine*, he muſt be a mere dupe to M. and a bigot to his principles, that can believe it. My *faith, I confeſs, is of a more humble kind, pays a greater ſubmiſſion to the dictates of reaſon*‖; and it *is not in my power to believe*, that I do not diſcover the marks of artifice and fraud. The Dr *muſt cram it down*,

* Remarks on ſome obſervations, p. 6, 81.
† Anſwer to Tunſtal, p. 64.
‖ Remarks on ſome obſervations, p. 11.

if I muſt ſwallow *. For as oracular as you may think him, I cannot yet believe and diſbelieve backwards and forwards, juſt as he would have me; and without the leaſt ſenſe or reaſon. You add; he could not ſurely be ſo imprudent as deſignedly to make falſe quotations, becauſe he muſt be found out, and afford ſtill greater triumph to his enemies. Prodigiouſly ſhrewd! as if men were never betrayed by their paſſions to do things that will hurt them. A remark, that would excuſe any fraud of any kind, however maliciouſly intended, or how pernicious ſoever in its conſequences. But I ſuppoſe your friend will not think himſelf obliged to you for this apology, as it will ſerve Tindal, or Toland, or Collins, as well as him; writers he ſeems to have a kindneſs for: but, I preſume, he would not chuſe to be in their company on this occaſion.

You are much miſtaken, however, if you think it is ſo eaſy to triumph over a veteran in the arts of controverſy; over a popular and celebrated author. Such a writer will have infinite reſources, and be able to ſupport his cauſe againſt great odds of truth and fact on the other ſide.

His works will of courſe be in many hands, and much admired, without examining his authorities: being read more for entertainment than for uſe; for the elegance of the compoſition, than for the improvement of the underſtanding. What has a writer then to apprehend from ſuch readers as theſe, who either *cannot* or *will not* examine his citations? The young ſinner may perhaps have ſome miſgivings at firſt: but if he finds his books are called for, notwithſtanding any ſurmiſes of this kind; after ſo certain a teſt of approbation, and

* Reply to let. to Dr W. p. 5.

repeated

repeated aſſurances of it, he may be tempted to try, how *much the public will bear*, and how great may *be the patience and blind deference of his readers to the authority of a great name.**

Of thoſe who are diſpoſed to examine, ſome may be more pleaſed with the dexterity, than diſpleaſed with the deſign of the author.

But if one ſhould be found ſo hardy as to publiſh againſt him; if his manner of writing is not pleaſing, let his matter be ever ſo pertinent, he may either be wholly diſregarded, or attacked ſome time after at a greater advantage: or if that be not expedient, an artful controvertialiſt can eaſily call off the attention of the reader from the conſideration of the argument, by entertaining him with ſome pleaſantries upon the perſon, or manners, or language of his opponent.

If this method fails, which can hardly ever be the caſe, and an anſwer in form is thought neceſſary, yet his adverſary's critical ſkill, his ſincerity, his good ſenſe, and good manners, may be called in queſtion; a ſingle quotation given up in order to inſinuate, that a dozen more would have had the ſame fate, if there had been the ſame reaſon: the reſt may be puzzled and perplexed a little with critical cavils, and then the buſineſs is done. For a reader muſt be obſtinate indeed if he is not ſatisfied; eſpecially when he is told beforehand, *any man of ſenſe and learning might have been ſafely truſted without any anſwer at all.*†

But if after all a reply ſhould be made, as ſome diſputants are very pertinacious, the world will then begin to be tired of the controverſy; and he may, without fear of diſguſting his reader, paſs

* Exam. of the uſe and iutent, &c. p. 8.

† Def. of let. to Dr. W. p. 1.

over

over all the quotations objected to, if there were twenty of them; except one or two, which he is in hopes he can anſwer, under a pretence of ſhortening a debate, that muſt otherwiſe be endleſs.*

So you are really perſuaded, ſaid the counſellor, that Dr M. *intended* to quote falſely?

No; not ſo neither, replied your brother: or if I did, you know it is not mine only, but the common opinion. However, I don't go ſo far, I propoſe it *only as a problem, and with great caution.* You have ſaid what you could on one ſide, I what I could on the other; and as near as I could on the Dr's own principles; and, that the more regard might be paid to what I advanced, almoſt in his own words. Theſe gentlemen are to judge, who is in the right, or neareſt to it; they have our reaſons: thoſe are ſufficient to decide the queſtion, without knowing our real thoughts. If the company are to be guided by authority, I am afraid they would follow yours rather than mine.

Nay, but you ſhould be more tender ſaid the counſellor, indeed you ſhould; this affects a gentleman's character.

What to propoſe *a problem*, anſwered your brother, briſkly? and with ſo much caution and diffidence? is it at laſt ſo tender a point with him? Why is he not then more tender of other authors? why ſhould I be more tender of him than he is of Moſes and the fathers? or have they no character to loſe? or are they not ſo great or ſo good as M——? or is the imputation of leſs conſequence? After all, why ſhould it be thought ſo tender a point to ſuppoſe M—— guilty of fraud,

* Rem. on reply, p. 10. l. 20-28.

if

if he may ſuppoſe them guilty of it? particularly, if he did it with the ſame pious intention, for *the advancement of religion*; had the ſame wiſe ends in view, *the good of the public*. His example therefore in accuſing them, will juſtify me in accuſing him, if I ſhould do it: as their examples, if he thinks they are for him, may help to keep him in countenance.

But why are ſuch ſlight conſiderations as theſe ever mentioned, when the great cauſe of truth is at ſtake; which ſhould weigh with us above all other conſiderations? for what is this or that man's character, when put in balance againſt truth? ſhould *not truth, or the leaſt glimmering of it*, be traced *carefully to its ſource, whatever is the conſequence, or whoever is the ſufferer?** After all, we may perhaps conſider thoſe frauds in too grave a way; and cenſure them too freely. I am perſuaded, if the Dr uſes them *deſignedly*, he does not look upon them in the ſame light with the generality of mankind. He may think there is as little harm in a falſe teſtimony, as in a falſe argument, ſince the one is as capable of being detected by examining the author, as the other by having recourſe to reaſon; nay ſooner, as men of great erudition are generally better judges of words than of ſenſe.

Every one knows the Dr's great maſter Cicero rather choſe, when he pleaded, to uſe the moſt prevailing reaſons, however falſe, than the moſt ſolid, however true: and why may not M. who ſeems to have a happy genius for refinements of this kind, be of the ſame opinion with regard to citations in the management of a controverſy? You know, gentlemen, the counſellor urged this

* Free enquiry, pref. p. 7.

very argument in the vindication of M. not perhaps without ſome intimation from him; however I don't inſiſt upon this: what ſeems more to our point is, Cicero himſelf has quoted falſely, even in controverſy; it may be with deſign: be it ſo or not, it would be ſtrange indeed if the Dr was not able to make ſome improvements upon him.

One finds, it is true, a great reluctance to ſuch a practice: but that is nothing to the purpoſe; that may be owing to ſome latent prejudice, which vulgar minds are not able to ſhake off; to the coldneſs of our climate, or the ſimplicity of our manners, which unfit us for ſo ſubtle and ingenious refinements. To try this in a ſimilar inſtance; have we not the ſame prejudice to political lying? and yet the Dr, among his other curious improvements, has convinced us, it is not inconſiſtent with the character of Moſes, as a legiſlator, or even as an inſpired writer.*

There ſeems the more reaſon to ſuppoſe, the Dr. eſteems this a very innocent art, when we conſider the other arts he makes uſe of in his controverſial writings; ſeveral inſtances of which I could eaſily produce from his laſt †, as well as other pieces, if I was not tired of the ſubject, and did not ſuſpect that you are all as much tired as I am.

No, no, ſaid the counſellor, I am not ſo ſoon tired as you imagine: ſince you are diſpoſed to be ſo ſevere upon M. I ſhall be glad to hear at once all you have to ſay upon his general character as a controverſial writer, as well as upon his laſt piece† in particular. When you have done, you will give me leave to reply; and I don't doubt but I ſhall be able to ſhew to the ſatisfaction of

* Letter to Dr W. and def.

† Examination of the uſe and intent of prophecy.

theſe

theſe gentlemen, that M. juſtly deſerves the character I have given him, notwithſtanding all you have ſaid, or can ſay, to the contrary.

Your brother replied, he was unable to do juſtice to ſuch a ſubject; a ſubject which required the experience and ability of an able divine: for his part he knew nothing of M's book till a few days ago; and the little he now knew of that, or his other controverſial pieces, had chiefly been collected from the books we ſaw before him: to them therefore he referred us, and deſired to be excuſed from ſaying any more, eſpecially on ſo little preparation, and ſo ſhort a warning.

We were all unanimous he ſhould proceed. The counſellor ſaid, you have gone too far to make your retreat; I ſhall rather think you piqued than convinced, if you are againſt M. without being able to aſſign your reaſons. As to your being unprepared, 'tis all a joke; I have known you enter into debates full as difficult, upon much leſs preparation.

I told him, the Dr. would probably be often mentioned in the country; and I ſhould be ſorry to loſe ſo fair an opportunity of hearing what could be ſaid for and againſt him. Even my conſin, who you know is deſigned for orders, could not forbear ſaying, though not without bluſhing extreamly, I hope, Sir, for my ſake, you will not deny us the ſatisfaction of hearing you. I am particularly intereſted in this debate, and I propoſe no ſmall improvement from it. I can ſee no reaſon why you ſhould decline it; except you have a mind to mortify me by giving me cauſe to ſuſpect, that I am deſigned, and chiefly by your advice, for a profeſſion, which you think too low for the converſation of men of your ſtation and quality.

Nay, this is violence, added your brother; not one of you to excuſe me; well, ſince you will have it ſo, I muſt ſubmit; but I wiſh you don't oblige me to hurt the cauſe, which I meant to defend.

Beſide the artful, or as my antagoniſt here calls it, the looſe and careleſs manner of M's quotations; I cannot but admire his great addreſs in *raiſing* or *calming our fears*, with regard to any conſequences which may follow from his doctrines.

If you plead for eſtabliſhed opinions, and the reverence due to them, he alarms you with the fatal effects of ſyſtems, and hypotheſes, and a ſuperſtitious regard to them: that at this time of day, when Chriſtianity is ſo cloſely and dangerouſly beſet, we ſhould demoliſh the outworks entirely, in order to be more able to repel the fierce onſets of free-thinkers.*

If according to this you ſuggeſt, that in his free enquiry, he is ſo cloſely attached to an hypotheſis of his own, and in ſuch a ſuperſtitious apprehenſion of popery, that what with his doting fondneſs for the one, and his unaccountable fear of the other, the poor old man is almoſt ready to give up his bible: here again an hypotheſis is quite another thing; it is not only harmleſs, it is of moment; and every conſequence which follows from it, the leaſt glimmering of truth ſtruck out by it to be carefully traced to its ſource, without any reſerve or caution of puſhing the diſcovery too far, or opening too great a glare of it †, even though it ſhould ſap the foundation of Chriſtianity: for he makes no limitation; ſo greatly is he bigotted to his own hypotheſis.

* Letter to Dr. Wat. and Deff.

† Pref. of the free enquiry.

If

If you enquire why hypotheſes in his opinion are ſometimes ſo bad, that no good can come out of them; ſometimes ſo good, that no harm can follow from them; why they are at different times ſo much *in* and *out* of his favour? a good reaſon would be hard to find; though his perhaps may be gueſſed at. It may be, ſome are eſtabliſhed, and ſome are not eſtabliſhed; or, what more nearly concerns him, ſome *are his* and ſome are *not his*.

If you ſhould enquire farther, how he comes to be more certain and leſs partial in drawing conſequences from his hypotheſes, than others are from theirs; eſpecially if his are purely his *own*, that of yours *traditionary* only: this might be difficult to anſwer, to the ſatisfaction of an impartial reader; but it is eaſy to ſee what it is that determines the author; for in order to eſtabliſh his own hypotheſis, he muſt defend all its conſequences, and decry every hypotheſis inconſiſtent with it. If therefore you ſhould ſay with regard to the miracles of the primitive church, that ſeveral of his arguments not only hold againſt popery, but even againſt Chriſtianity too, if they hold at all; and therefore, as they prove too much, they prove nothing: this acute logician, and profound reaſoner, has, in effect, told you, that truth is his aim; he is not afraid of conſequences; if his proofs go too far, they ſurely go far enough; that he is in no pain how far they go, the farther the better: that he, good man, for his part, is a lover of truth; and for it above all things; nor is he afraid to let in too great a glare of it*; 'tis the buſineſs of his life, his deſtin'd taſk, to promote it. Well, what will you do now? will you allow this reaſoning? (and who indeed can have the

* Free enquiry.' pref.

heart

heart or the head to reſiſt it?) Will you defend your ſide of the queſtion in the ſame manner, and mind no conſequences? if you proceed this way you give him great advantages, and afford this zealous and orthodox proteſtant ſufficient matter for declamation: he may tell you, you are a papiſt; or, at leaſt, that your *principles lead you into the depths of popery. What fright me with the conſequences of popery, when he is not afraid of conſequences which affect Chriſtianity itſelf?* Pray, be cool; there is a great deal in timing things well. *Bleſs me! can time alter the nature of things?* Don't be ſo hot; he may not only do this, he may draw an inſidious illuſtration too.

If an obſcure ſilly author, who is a profeſt Jacobite, has happened to publiſh any thing that with the utmoſt art can be brought in as a favourer of your principles, his work will be explained with the greateſt parade, and in the moſt invidious manner; and you will be ſtigmatized as his fellow labourer in the vineyard of popery. How will you ſtem the torrent of prejudice that will now flow againſt you? *What more eaſy? as bad as popery is, it is better ſure than no religion!* Not ſo faſt: as ſuperſtition has been thought worſe than atheiſm; popery muſt certainly be ſo; being the worſt ſort of ſuperſtition. Be that as it will; you forget the times we live in †, the alarms, the narrow eſcape we have had from popery and ſlavery. Will you, at ſuch a critical juncture, be ſo impolitic, as to chuſe to be thought a papiſt rather than an infidel? Will you make this confeſſion at a time, you might eaſily ſee, if you did but con-

* Remarks on two pamphlets againſt the introductory diſcourſe. Pref.

† The introductory diſcourſe was publiſhed ſoon after the rebellion.

ſider

ſider it, that the nation had more to fear from popery than infidelity; as being in more immediate danger from the one than from the other. This Dr M. who is not the worſe politician for his journey to Rome, knew perfectly well: and therefore he uſes all his art to fix the imputation of popery upon the *Lambeth chaplain*, at the ſame time that he wantonly ſhews the greateſt contempt of the imputation of infidelity; and would inconſiſtently enough in the defence of one of the ſame hypotheſis, *decry and enforce* the conſequences of it, according as they are for, or againſt him. 'Tis true, he has by this conduct an opportunity to exert the candour and generoſity you mentioned, to infidel writers, which he ſhowers upon them ſo bountifully, that he ſeems to have none left for the orthodox and ſyſtematic divines. But perhaps this Corban to the treaſury of free-thinking may exempt him from ſhewing any offices of humanity to his ſpiritual father, the biſhop; or to his poor brethren, the clergy of the church of England.

Another art the Dr uſes, we may ſuppoſe, in his account, very innocently, is, to confute a whole treatiſe by anſwering a part of it. For, according to him, frauds in the literary and mercantile world are of a ſimilar nature *; ſo that if the ſample or ſpecimen is bad, you have no occaſion to look over the reſt, but may pronounce upon the whole without farther inquiry: for inſtance,

An author of great eminence in the learned world, in a reply to a noted letter of Dr M.'s, charged him with many falſhoods contained in that letter, both in the quotations and hiſtorical facts: and in order to prove the charge, produced

* Anſwer to Mr Tunſtal. Pref.

fifteen

fifteen quotations, and two hiſtorical facts, as falſely reported by him.

The Dr having pleaded not guilty to all of them except one, the Replier in a ſecond letter ſtill perſevered in his charge: inſiſting upon every ſingle inſtance of falſhood charged upon the Dr; and alleging, that if he did not ſhew that the new quotations, which the Dr had produced in his defence, were commonly of the ſame ſtamp with the former; if he did not ſhew, that the Dr generally miſrepreſented the very words of the firſt reply, and then form an anſwer to what the Replier never ſaid; the Replier would be content to paſs for as low a creature in learning, and reaſoning, as the Dr (in aid of his arguments) had all along endeavoured to repreſent him *. In conſequence of this, he goes over the quotations again, conſiders the Dr's exceptions to his charge, and gives a full and ſatisfactory confutation of them.

Now, what do you think is the Dr's anſwer to this? why truly, that it is not worth while to follow the Replier again through all his cavils; that a controverſy would be the buſineſs of life, if we muſt treat it at this rate; and dwell for ever on the ſame facts. I have, ſays he, ſaid enough on each, and am content to leave the merit of it to the judgment of the reader. However, to ſhew you I have no other reaſon to decline any debate or argument you offer, but merely to ſave time, and cut ſhort unneceſſary ſyllables, I ſhall run over again with you *one or two* of your inſtances, where you fancy you are the ſtrongeſt, or have added ſome new force to your former exceptions.

Is not this very extraordinary, gentlemen, that

* Second reply to M.'s def. of a letter to Dr Waterland, p. 1.

the

the Dr ſhould not attack, where he was ſure of a victory! this is the more amazing, as he is not uſually ſo unkind to himſelf, or ſo generous to his adverſary. It is well known, he is generally too fond of a triumph; that he ſeeks it ſometimes in trifles; in any oddity of ſtile, or peculiarity of expreſſion; in the bombaſt of a period, or quaintneſs of a title page: and ſometimes, as I have ſaid before, at too great an expence, by miſrepreſenting ancient authors, which he pretends to quote; or modern ones, which he pretends to confute. Hence, therefore, one would be apt to ſuſpect, the Dr does not decline the engagement becauſe he is ſure, but becauſe he deſpairs, of ſucceſs. That ſince he cannot march off without a ſkirmiſh, he uſes a kind of running fight with the ſmall remains of his forces, in which he can at all confide; in order to make as good a retreat as poſſible, with the main body of his army.

This may give light to another part of the Dr's writings, which, I own, greatly puzzled and perplexed me before I hit upon this happy ſolution.

In reading over his anſwer to Tunſtal, I was ſurprized to find the Dr had only anſwered one part of it; and my ſurprize was not leſſened, after conſidering T.'s letter as well as I was able: for I could not help thinking, that though the whole ſeemed to be pretty well founded, yet that part which remained without an anſwer was, in all appearance, the leaſt liable to exception. How to call this a fair proceeding, or to reconcile it with the Dr's great love of truth, and ſearch of it in every debate, I did not well know.

My perplexity encreaſed by reading the following paſſages; "As to the other part of his Latin epiſtle, every one will eaſily gueſs from this *ſketch*

of his critical talents, what the merit of it muſt be; it is all of a piece; exactly agreable to the *ſpecimen* here given."

Here I confeſs I did not ſee the equity of condemning a whole piece upon the demerit of a part, and that part ſelected at the option of an adverſary; for at this rate hardly any author could eſcape, there being very few if any without fault: to give an inſtance or to, which this author will hardly diſpute.

If it ſhould be proved, that Moſes was not a *political lyar*, *as* had been aſſerted *problematically* by the ingenious author of a celebrated letter to Dr Waterland; would it be fair to conclude, that the reſt was all of a piece? would it not be great raſhneſs to condemn, from this ſmall ſpecimen, what the ſame ingenuous author had ſaid upon circumciſion, the origin of languages, and the fall of man.

Should it appear ever ſo plain, that the ſame elegant writer was, in the letters juſt mentioned, guilty of the falſhoods laid to his charge; as perhaps he was; could we juſtly preſume the reſt to be all of a piece, exactly agreable to this ſpecimen?

If it was clear; as perhaps after all it is, that the celebrated author of a letter from Rome, and of a late free inquiry, was miſtaken in his charge againſt the fathers about the ſtatue of Simon Magus, and in ſome other inſtances; would you think this ſufficient to invalidate all the other facts mentioned in thoſe books?

If, therefore, in every one of thoſe inſtances, it muſt appear at firſt ſight unreaſonable to argue in this manner, as I believe the Dr will eaſily grant; then I muſt aver, that it is equally unreaſonable to condemn Mr Tunſtal's whole epiſtle, becauſe

becauſe a part is ſaid to be exceptionable; or even allowed to be ſo.

It muſt be owned, however, that the Dr tells us; "he did not ſingle out this part, as the moſt obnoxious, or moſt liable to be confuted; but as the only one in which men of letters and curioſity could be intereſted. The reſt —— was employed *chiefly* in conteſting the time and order of certain minute facts —— which whether true or falſe were of little or no moment —— and could not be of any uſe or entertainment to the public. ——

But this gave me no ſatisfaction; for I was perſuaded he had undertaken the more exceptionable part only: and I recollected many paſſages he had condeſcended to reply to, which were not more intereſting or entertaining than thoſe to which he had made no reply; and ſome of them as minute too.

Beſides, he ſeemed to betray a little conſciouſneſs, that theſe were not his true reaſons; by remarking that Mr Tunſtal had employed the part unanſwered, *chiefly* in conteſting the time and order of certain minute facts: for by thus guarding the ſentence, he gave reaſon to ſuſpect, not only that the dates of ſome of the facts, but ſome of the facts too, might be of importance.

However, I was loth to give way to this ſuſpicion; eſpecially as the Dr had ſaid, that if ever he ſhould be invited by a proper occaſion to enter upon a full vindication of himſelf againſt all the exceptions which T—— had made: he could ſhew his whole performance, as eaſily as he had ſhewn this part of it, to be a frivolous, captious, diſingenuous, piece of criticiſm; full of more real miſtakes within the compaſs of a little volume, than he pretends even to have found, in the large work he has thought fit to criticize.

But this, thought I, good Dr, is not reaſoning, but railing *; and till it is ſupported by facts and proofs ſufficient to convince men of ſenſe, will always paſs with ſuch for the common place ſtuff of declamatory writers.

Having finiſhed his anſwer, and Mr T——l's reply, I began to ſearch for the Dr's ſecond anſwer; fully expecting that all my doubts would now be cleared up; and every ſcruple, which had been raiſed in T——l's firſt or ſecond piece, be entirely removed: for I took this to be *a proper occaſion* for a full anſwer, if there could be any.

Not meeting, however, with the anſwer I expected among the books before me; I ſent to the friend, who had helped me to the Mid——n controverſy; deſiring him by all means to let me have it immediately; for I imagined he had forgot to pack it up with the reſt. But gueſs at my ſurprize, when I was aſſured there was no anſwer. No anſwer, cried I, it is impoſſible. What! ſhall a young adventurer be too hard for a veteran in controverſy? an attempt crowned with ſucceſs, which is ſo weakly ſupported; where ſcarce a ſingle objection is produced, but what is grounded either on miſtake, or miſapplication of the teſtimonies alledged to confirm it †. And ſhall ſo glorious an atchievement be reſerved after ſo many ages to an adventurer in the noviciate of his criticiſm, and the very firſt eſſay of his ſkill? a glorious atchievement indeed; glorious in the boldneſs and difficulty of the attempt, in the compleatneſs and importance of the victory! Is it not aſtoniſhing, that a raw unfledged critic ſhould be able to deprive us of a ſeries of original letters; the moſt

* Let. to Dr W. p. 5.

† Anſwer to T——, pr. p. 123.

valuable

valuable of that kind, which are preſerved to us from old Rome; written in the very criſis and laſt ſtruggle of her liberty, by the greateſt men who then lived in it, and who ſoon after died for it: that this invaluable treaſure, which we were rightly poſſeſſed of, had ſo long enjoyed, and ſo highly valued, ſhould be wreſted from us; after ſo able a champion, perfectly informed and long experienced in all the ſubtilties of controverſy, had endeavoured, as far as he was able, to inſure to us the poſſeſſion of it.

On the whole, I fell into a moſt profound contemplation. I could not for my life conceive it poſſible, that ſo experienced and redoubted a champion could be ſo little able to foreſee the event of this diſpute, or conceive ſo fooliſh a contempt for the adverſary and his cauſe. There muſt, I imagined, be more in this than appeared at firſt ſight; he muſt certainly feign a contempt, which he really has not, in order to miſlead the unwary reader into the ſame.

Perhaps it is all one to him, whether he gains his point, by art or argument, by deceit or reaſoning; that here, as in war, the victory obtained by ſtratagem, is equally glorious as by open force, and equally honourable too: perhaps for the ſame reaſon, he may ſeem to ſlight what he deſpairs to anſwer; or, to ſave appearances, he may examine a part, in order to condemn the whole with a better grace: and indeed the ſcheme is plauſible enough; for who would chuſe to go through a tedious dull controverſy, when he may be ſufficiently informed by an entertaining ſketch or ſpecimen; and arrive at the ſame degree of knowledge by a way ſo much more eaſy and compendious.

I had now therefore, as I thought, gained ſome footing and ground, as it were, to ſtand upon.

on *. For this diſcovery, as I eſteemed it, of the ſtate of the author's mind, reflected freſh light on my ſearch into his writings, both before and ſince; and from its middle ſituation, gave me a clearer view of his conduct, as well in the earlier, as the later controverſies, which he has been engaged in. For inſtance, if we ſuppoſe it was the love of *victory*, and not of *truth*, which engaged him in this method of defence againſt Mr T——; the firſt inference it ſuggeſts, is, that he had uſed the like arts, and proceeded on the ſame ſort of motives in his former controverſial writings: for, if we reflect on that ſurprizing confidence and ſecurity with which he falls upon this method againſt T——l, it is natural to ſuſpect, that ſo bold a defiance of an impartial ſearch after truth, could not be acquired and become ſo predominant at once; but muſt have been carried gradually to that height, by cuſtom, and a long experience of what the blind deference and credulity of the multitude had born in other inſtances †. It muſt be the practice of one, who had experienced, that falſe quotations might be excuſed by a miſtake in his common place; be defended by ſuperficial reaſoning, or other quotations as falſe; or given up at laſt without any diminution of character: of one, who perhaps plumes himſelf, and is complimented by others, for his uncommon abilities and ſucceſs in theſe and other arts of the ſame nature.

From theſe premiſes it is evident, that the character of his former controverſial writings, to the time of Mr T——, muſt neceſſarily taint the credit of all his later pieces down even to his laſt remarkable attack upon the biſhop of London: for

* Introd. diſc. 67.

† Exam. of the uſe, &c. 84.

they

they depend, as it were, upon each other, as the parts of one uniform ſeries or chain; ſo that wherever we draw out a link, all the reſt, which hang upon it, muſt of courſe fall to the ground *. What will add ſome degree of ſtrength to this reaſoning, is, that this wily profeſſor ſtill improves in the crafty arts of controverſy; and, beſides his greater addreſs in the practice of the old ones, gives us in each new piece freſh ſpecimens of his ſuperior ſkill in this noble ſcience: with this view he condeſcends, in his later pieces, as we have ſeen, to triumph upon any little peculiarity of ſtile or ſentiment; with this view he artfully urges the conſequences of his hypotheſis concerning the miracles of primitive Chriſtianity; though he had formerly declamed as artfully againſt all hypotheſes, and all the conſequences of them.

Would not a man from all this be tempted to ſuſpect, that the Dr may perhaps eſteem a ſtate of controverſy a ſtate of war; where he is at liberty to uſe every art and ſtratagem in his power to get the better of his enemy. That, like the late grand monarch, who was a great maſter of Polemics too in his way, he thinks he ought always to be talking of the ſacredneſs of truth; boaſting of his inſeperable attachment to it, his inviolable love of it; becauſe this may add credit to his cauſe, bring over the credulous to his party: but that, upon the principles of Machiavel, he is upon no account whatever to be a ſufferer for the ſake of it. In ſhort, that truth may be pretended, as a means; but never purſued, as an end. For the end of controverſy, according to the eſtabliſhed laws of it, is not truth, but victory.

This, gentlemen, I freely own, is my way of

* Exam. of the uſe, &c. 83.

account-

accounting for the Dr's method of managing a controverſy. Nor can I conceive how a gentleman of the Dr's great ſimplicity, a gentleman who is ſo ſincere a believer, ſo zealous a defender of revelation, and ſo orthodox a proteſtant; could ever bring himſelf to practiſe arts, which ſeem ſo contrary to the purity of the goſpel, if he did not believe there was ſome implicite exception for the men of the quill as well as the ſword, for controverſy as well as war.

However, far be it from me to be too ſanguine or dogmatical in an affair of this delicacy and importance; or guilty of any thing which may in the leaſt detract from Dr M.'s reputation: and therefore, for fear I may be miſtaken or miſrepreſented, I beg leave, with the utmoſt ſubmiſſion, to propoſe it as a problem; Whether perhaps one may not venture to gueſs, that ſome degree of deceit or art may poſſibly be allowed in certain caſes to ſolve ſome difficulties in the Dr's controverſial writings, without the leaſt blemiſh to his character.*

But, as I am afraid this problem may after all be thought exceptionable, I deſire you would take notice, that I expreſsly diſclaim the *leaſt thought* of advancing any thing, which may *detract* from the great character the Dr deſervedly enjoys. In the next place, where I ſeem to allow ſome degree of deceit or art; I have uſed all the terms of doubt, reſerve, and diffidence, that can poſſibly be crowded into a ſentence; *perhaps*, *may venture*, *to gueſs*, *ſome degree*, *may poſſibly be allowed*; which by no means imply a firm perſuaſion, but a hint

* Remarks on ſome obſervations, p. 16.
Defence of a letter to Dr W. p. 45.
Remarks on a reply, p. 50, 51.

only

only to ground a queſtion upon; that queſtion too not very preciſe, whether it is deceit or art only: and ſtill upon a ſuppoſition, that ſuch a queſtion can do no manner of hurt to his character *. It is farther to be obſerved, and I beg you would obſerve it very carefully; that I don't maintain, it is abſolutely innocent to deceive in *all caſes*, which would be a very fooliſh and raſh aſſertion indeed; it is only in *certain caſes*, where people may be deceived *for their good:* of which, however, it is but reaſonable, that the controverſialiſt ſhould be the ſole judge; as the morality of his determination muſt entirely flow from *his ſenſe* of it.

And, to ſupport what I now affirm; I can prove, to the utter confuſion of my oppoſers, that the beſt moraliſts of the heathen world, almoſt all the chriſtian writers from the earlieſt ages, and the very beſt authors of morality, Grotius, Puffendorf, &c. hold it as innocent to deceive the people for their good, as for parents to deceive their children, or phyſicians their patients. This, I hope, is abundantly ſufficient to juſtify M. in any practices of this kind, though they had been much more frequent and notorious than they have.

It may appear ſtrange perhaps, and difficult to be reconciled with the principles of Dr M. that I ſhould endeavour to vindicate him from the example of the ancient fathers; whoſe authority of late he ſeems ſo much to deſpiſe, and whoſe credit he has ſo greatly reduced. To explain this I beg leave to obſerve: there are two reaſons for quotations; one, becauſe the writer, the other, becauſe his adverſary, may think well of them. In one caſe therefore they ſerve to ſupport the writers ſen-

* Remarks on a reply, p. 52.

timents; in the other, only to ſilence his oppoſers. In the former of theſe ways I don't remember to have met with one ſingle inconteſtible quotation in all the Dr's writings; though in the latter you often meet with them, and may often meet with them again: and it is to this purpoſe, and to this alone, I now introduce them. I the rather mention this diſtinction, as it may remove a ſeeming inconſiſtency of no ſmall moment, which often occurs in this celebrated writer, and might otherwiſe be a little difficult to account for; for it may appear a little odd, the Dr ſhould ſo often appeal to a ſet of writers for whom he has ſo great a contempt, if it was not to ſecure himſelf from a neſt of hornets, a ſet of orthodox parſons, who would be perpetually teizing and annoying him, but for this protection.

This, gentlemen, is all I have to ſay on Dr M.'s controverſial writings. If I had had more time, it would have been eaſy to have collected more materials; but, as the Dr ſays, you may judge from theſe ſpecimens, what his general manner is: or if more inſtances are wanted, his laſt piece * will afford us enow of them. But, before we proceed to the conſideration of THAT, I would adviſe you to take a diſh of tea: ſo ſaying, he led us into the next room, where we ſat down to breakfaſt.

* Examination of *the uſe and intent of prophecy.*

End of part the Firſt.

In a few Days will be publiſhed, Part II.